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Baldwin: GOP budget 'fiscally irresponsible'

Calls it most careless in U.S. history

By Samara Kalk Derby
March 13, 2003

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U.S. Rep. Tammy Baldwin, D-Madison, is outraged by the Republican congressional budget, calling it "the most fiscally irresponsible in American history."


House Republicans introduced their budget Tuesday night, and Baldwin, a member of the House Budget Committee, spent all of Wednesday and into this morning trying to counteract Republican budget cuts.


Baldwin said the Republican budget slashes critical programs in order to finance excessive tax cuts for the wealthy and fails to address the country's need for job creation.

"We're really focused on priorities that would put America back to work. I just think that has to be the short-term goal of this budget - investments in education, investments in health, and balancing the budget by acting responsibly," Baldwin said by phone between amendment votes late Wednesday night.

"This is unconscionable," she said.

The House Republican budget cuts \$670 billion from programs to pay for President George W. Bush's proposed tax cut of the same figure. The new cuts go "above and beyond" Bush's proposals, she said.

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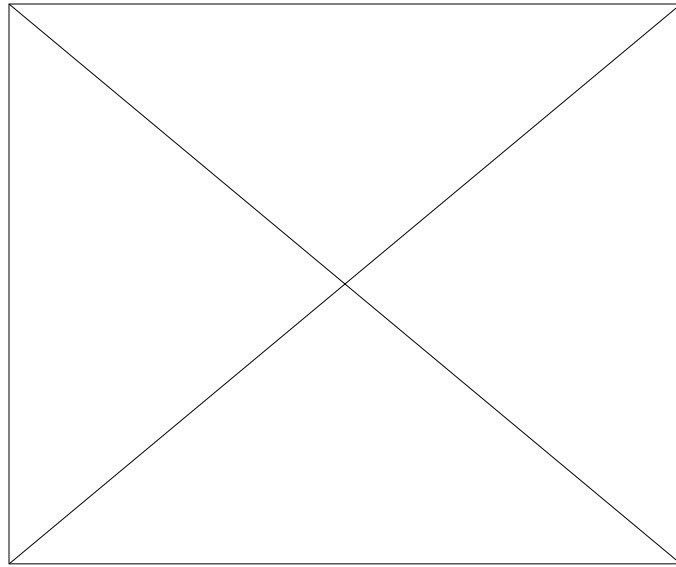
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U.S. Rep. Tammy Baldwin



Cuts to Medicare, veterans health care, education, agriculture and environmental protection were made solely to cover the costs of additional Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, contended Baldwin, whose committee was participating in its annual "markup" of the administration's budget.

The committee was adding amendments to the budget before it is brought to the House floor next week. It was expected to vote on the budget resolution today with Baldwin, whose party is in the minority, voting against it.

"We've had a series of amendments offered by the Democrats, and so far all of them have been voted down on party lines. We are trying as hard as we can to make this into a fiscally responsible budget and address our priorities," she said.

Baldwin offered several amendments to the budget:

Restore \$7.7 billion to education programs cut by President Bush.

Increase funding for the National Institutes of Health

and National Science Foundation by \$4.5 billion.

Restore \$15 billion in cuts to the Veterans Administration, and increase funding by \$1 billion.

Redirect \$89.2 billion in tax credits to Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to expand health coverage for the uninsured. The amendment also provides \$60 billion in tax credits to small businesses and their employees for health insurance.

Extend Medicare payment policy to equalize payment rates for urban and rural hospitals.

Reject the idea of rolling Medicaid funding into a block grant for states, and provide \$10 billion in cost relief to the states by altering the federal medical assistance percentage once a year.

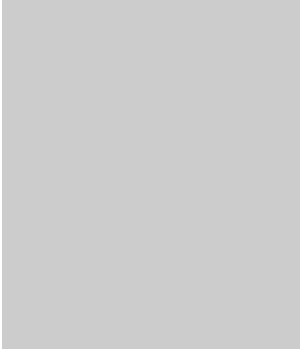
Baldwin said each of the amendments she supported were fully paid for by reducing the overall size of the Bush tax cut.

"We're trying to restore critical funding to programs without burdening the next generation with debt cost," she said.

The president's proposed tax cuts will cost \$1.6 trillion over 10 years. Baldwin said 47 percent of Wisconsin families would get less than \$100 from the cuts, and 27 percent would get nothing. Meanwhile, families making more than \$1 million would reap more than \$90,222 apiece.

"That's just plain unfair to the hard-working families of Wisconsin," Baldwin said.

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